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ABSTRACT

A consultation was conducted in China to examine the use of the experience and competence of the elderly in the education of youth and adults; the education of the elderly was also studied. Participants were 15 experts from Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, the United States, the Sudan, France, the Soviet Union, and China, along with additional observers from China. During the consultation, the discussion centered on the elderly's role and status in the education of youth and adults, opportunities and conditions for the continuing education of the elderly, participation of the elderly in socioeconomic and cultural development, and international and bilateral cooperation in favor of the education of the elderly and the promotion of their role in intergenerational education. A curriculum for action resulted, based on the belief that each individual older person can contribute to the society and the principle of changing "free time" to "useful time." From these principles emerged practices and solutions that can be adapted to developed and developing nations. Models for work and career, based in human development, also were drawn up, and opportunities for continuing education were examined. The discussion was supplemented by visits to universities for the aged in Wuhan, China. Recommendations were made for implementation of opportunities for education by and for the elderly. (A list of participants is included in the report.) (KC)

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EXPERT CONSULTATION ON THE UTILIZATION OF THE EXPERIENCE AND COMPETENCE OF THE ELDERLY IN THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH AND ADULTS.

ED339843

Wuhan, People's Republic of China

21—25 November 1989

FINAL REPORT

Adult Education Department,
State Education Commission of P.R.China

China Association of
Universites for the Aged

United Nations Educational
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

The Expert Consultation on the Utilization of the Experience and Competence of the Elderly in the Education of Youth and Adults was organised in accordance with paragraph 02319 of the Approved Programme and Budget for 1988—1989 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its Twenty Fourth Session (October—November 1987) and within the framework of cooperation between UNESCO and Member States. In response to an offer from the People' s Republic of China to host the Consultation. UNESCO entered into an agreement with the National Commission of the People's #Republic of China for UNESCO , for Wuhan University for the Aged to organize the consultation.

The objective of the Consultation was to examine the Utilization of the Experience and Competence of the Elderly in the Education of Youth and Adults. This objective was widened by the Chinese host organization to include the education of the elderly. It was agreed that this provided the Consultation with a broader focus.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONSULTATION

Fifteen experts from the following countries and region participated , Australia (2). German Democratic Republic(1). Hong Kong (2).Japan (1).UnitedStated of America(1). Sudan(1).France(1).USSR(1). People' s Republic of China (5) and additional observers from China (list of Participants Annexed). Participants were invited on the basis of their expertise in the area of gerontology and adult education and their personal capacities.

OPENING SESSION

The Consultation was opened by Mr Dong Mingchuan , representative of the State Education Commission of China , Mr Wang Mingquan , Vice Mayor of Wuhan City and Mr Habib Mobarak of representing the Director General of UNESCO.

Following the Opening Ceremony the Bureau for the Consultation was elected consisting of:

Chairman Mr Dong Mingchuan (China)
Vice Chairman Dr B. El-Bakri (Sudan)
Professor Leonard Romney (USA)
Mr Zhang Yacun (China)
Mr Yury Proshin (USSR)
Rapporteurs Mr Cliff Picton (Australia)
Professor Du Zicai (China)
assisted by a drafting committee consisting of Professor Romney (USA) and Mr Mobarak (UNESCO)

DOCUMENTS PREPARED FOR THE CONSULTATION

Two Background Papers
Towards New Intergenerational Co-Operation For Development (February1989) by Claudine Attias-Donfut.
Elements To Be Taken Into Consideration In Structuring Programmes

Aimed At Involving., The Elderly As Providers And Not Only As Beneficiaries Of Education (March 1989)

Position paper by experts from Australia, USA, German Democratic Republic , Japan and a number of papers by Chinese experts describing innovative educational programme for old people were presented and discussed.

PROCEEDINGS

The Consultation conducted all its work in plenary sessions to ensure maximum participation. The following report summarises the extensive discussion on:

- .The Elderly's Role and Status In Education of Youth And Adults
- .The Opportunities And Conditions For The Continuing Education of The Elderly
- .The Participation of The Elderly In Socio—Economic And Cultural Development.
- .International And Bilateral Cooperation In Favor Of The Education Of The Elderly And The Promotion of Their Role In Intergenerational Education.

PREAMBLE

At a time when the population of the countries of the world are aging at an unprecedented rate it is timely to recognize the educational needs of old people, not only as a right for each individual but also as actual and potential contributors to social, economic cultural development and in particular to the education of the young.

Education is and should be recognized as a lifelong process. This was highlighted in recommendation 47 of the UN International Plan of Action on Aging (The Vienna Plan, 1982) which states:

In accordance with the concept of lifelong education promulgated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), informal community-based and recreation-oriented programmes for the aging should be promoted in order to help them develop self-reliance and community responsibility. Such programmes should enjoy the support of nationalgovernments and international organizations.

In many ways older people have become marginalised in regard to their psychological,intellectual, social and economic needs in spite of progress made in broad economic terms in many countries. The plight of older people in develop-ing countries is particularly severe as they face multiple deprivations includ-ing poverty, ill health and illiteracy. In the developed countries greater economic security has often been accompanied by different deprivations such as losses of social status and significant roles in family and community life.The phenomenon of an aging world population represents a number of challengesto society. Present and future old people need access to education that will satisfy their unmet intellectual needs for stimulation and the acquisition of skills and knowledge that will be of practical value, in economic terms, particularly in those developing countries lacking adequate social security provisions. This is an especially urgent need in rural areas where the problem is most pronounced. Education may provide essential survival skills for the growing of food and earning money for

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other necessities.Similarly greater access to education will encourage the creative use of increased leisure time that generally accompanies old age.

Another challenge is to old people themselves. As countries seek to make improvements in living standards through social services and to enrich community life in general, they cannot ignore the social and cultural achievements of pastgenerations. Older people have key roles to play in

the education of childrenand young adults by providing access, of cultural invasion to important cultural and spirtual values. As repositories of knowledge, information, experience and wisdom they represent a priceless resourse that is still largelyuntapped. This in itself underscores the need for old people to have greateraccess to education as it will enhance their ability to pass their knowledgeon to young people.

The means to the achievement of this goal of education for older people will, of course, need to take account of a wide range of social and cultural differences. These differences in themselves represent an additional potential benefit if they can be systematically studied and the findings used to develop innovative programmes. However, a note of caution should be sounded to avoid and tendencies to 'cultural invasion' of developing countries. By virtue of their population strctures some can be described as 'old civilizations but young nations'. In these countries both young and old may bear the burden ofcatbacks in educational provision as a consequence of crippling external debtand the subsequent economic structural adjustment. Empowerment of the old through education may in fact be a vital educational resource for the young. Society also needs to recognize the general value of promoting intergenerational cooperation. As well as confirming the role and status of old people in intergeneration education, social cohesion will be promoted by reducing the so- called generation gap and revitalizing the family. No society can afford to create ghettoes of old people , isolated from the mainstream of social life.

The session on the Contribution of the Elderly to Society resulted in 'A Curriculu for Action'. This section of the report develops that curriculum.

The basic principle underlying the curriculum for action is the belief and committment that each individual older person can contribute to society. Opportunimust exist that give this impetus by asking how can you contribute? From this will flow the capability, competance, and capacity of the elderly to contribute.

A second principle in changing the concept of "free time" -time that might drag and result in despair, to 'useful time' -time that challenges, creates and contributes to both the person's quality of life and to the improvement of the society.

These two principles while applied differently in developing and developed nations are truthful for both. They provide a foundation for the Andragogy of the 21st century.

From these principle, emerged practices and solutions, useful to the dual environments of the developing and developed nations but again modified by the background of social-cultural traditions and the state of development of each nations.

The Apprenticeship Model for Work and Career suggests that the experienced elder can demonstrate, guide, share the planning of career, facilitate the entry of the newcomer to the culture of work and provide the essential support needed for success in either the urban factory of a developed society or tilling the soil in a developing nation.

A model based in human development is one that used what Robert Butler calls 'the elder function'. This function is one of the elderly person utilizing wisdom accumulated through living. The elder transmits to the younger. Skills in moral development, decision-making skill for political involvement and social skills for advancement. These skills are essential if the young person is to contribute in an increasingly couplex world of both the developing and developed nations. The challenges of each situation require these necessary skills for survival of the young.

Transitions in political leadership requires mentors. In the community and in the villages , the elder mentors can transmit the procedures, processes, and policies that work to the younger. Political mentoring by the elderly is a contributory role in both developing and developed societies.

Two models of learning require an elderly experienced educated person. This is the Tutorship-Companion and Mentor-Student models. Both of these models are similar. In the Tutorship-Companion model and the Mentor-Student model , the elderly peron acts as the mentor with the expertise of experience. A person with farming and other agricultural skills could, through example and sociallearning, show the younger person how to farm. The companionship of a younger person could be the help the younger person gives to help overcome the isolution some elderly people face. In the villages, the economic skill derived from experience could be used.

In the Mentor-Student Model, a learning contract is developed between the older mentor and the younger student. This contract states exactly what is to be learned, how it is to be done, how evaluated. and the responsibilities each member has for the learning. This is a form of individualized instruction that spells out exactly how the learning will take place.

The Second-Chance Model, gives the elderly person who never had a chance to complete education, a second chance. It can be used to gain literacy skills or to continue interrupted studies.

Related to this is the Peer-Counselor Model for the old. Many older people are suspicious of taking advice from younger people. They also fear the thoughtof returning to school. To overcome these difficulties, the role of peer counselor has emerged. A peer of similiar age provides emotional support as well as motivation to return to the world of study. This is useful in both developing and developed nations.

The Koranic Model. The skeikh is both an older person and a person of wisdom. For the youngster, the older sheikh provides the principles of Koran and the skills of experiential learning. Additionally, by living with the sheikh, the youngster acquires both life skills as well as religious morality.

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Peasant Model-derives from Egypt. The peasant elder acquires through the experiences of agriculture, a 'technological memory'. This is an ability to adapt to technological change and a capacity for creative skill which allows the person to continue the process of non-formal education and to be a mentor, to the young. Appreciation of this ability in developing nations provides the young with a role-model for his learning in a non-formal manner.

RSVP/Foster Grandparents Programs are two programs in America which demonstrate the capacity of the elder to serve society. Foster Grandparents provide service to young children in day-care centers, schools and child care institutions. The Retired Service Volunteer Program is broader.

RSVP volunteers provide services in hospitals, in visiting isolated elders, and developing a crime-prevention program. These volunteer efforts enhance the quality of life in communities in the developed nations.

Opportunities and Conditions for Elderly Continuing Education

UNESCO Survey Themes:

1. Projects can be undertaken to integrate the elderly in developing nations.

2. In Africa, extended families provide supports, connections, comfort, and respect for the elderly. Will this change as the Traditional Society moves into the era of Technological Modernization? What will be the impact on the elderly if this occurs?

3. Elderly represent a reserve of human resources with ability and experience.

4. In Gambia, young and old take courses together in a demonstration of intergenerational self-help.

5. Latin America has positive perceptions of the elderly. Both groups take courses together and this extends to outside social activities.

6. Norway's conference on the Elderly As A Resource which received coverage through TV, Radio, and Press taught the young to change their perception of the elderly.

The global comprehensive survey reached similar conclusions as this seminar. Technological and rapid social changes impact on both developing and developed societies. Conclusions regarding these changes are tentative with nuances in recommendations with regard to these concerns.

This is a complex task that includes these variables:

1. Getting Educated-The Second Chance Population
2. Continuing Life-Long Education
3. Possibility of the Educational-Cultural Lag as developing nations move to prosperity
4. What are the implications for future education of the elderly is a challenge to us all?

International and Bilateral Cooperation

Participants in the consultation were reminded that there are already a number of international Normative Instruments which have been adopted by the United Nations and its agencies. They are

* Recommendation on the development of adult education adopted by Unesco at its 19th session in 1976 (Nairobi).
* The International Plan of Action on Aging 1982 (Vienna Plan). Unesco is a partner in implementing the plan.
* Recommendations of the 4th International Conference on Adult Education in Paris 1985.
* The establishment of the UN International Institute on Aging in Malt in October 1987.

These instruments already provide avenues for cooperation at a number of levels, including government and non-government. Progress is being made to extend them to greater cooperation on adult education. These agreements must be used more effectively.

In order to set in train a comprehensive range of initiatives it will probably be necessary to set short and long term goals. These may range from the use of technical information systems for the dissemination of information; the publication of a journal in a number of different languages; bilateral and international exchanges of old people and teachers, especiallyin rural areas of developing countries; the establishment of a center to coordinate research; the setting up of research projects including cross-cultural studies intointer-generational relationships; and the inden- tification and gathering of resources for cooperation. Alongside these proposals it is important not to rely totally on money. We must tap the reservoir of goodwill and inventiveness of old people as well as use the knowledge and skills of Consultation participants to establish a resource network. It will be clearly important to establish a priority list and an action plan.

VISITS

The general discussion was supplemented by a number of visits to universities for the aged in Wuhan. Participants in the Consultation were impressed at the range of activities available and the high degree of motivation shown by the older learners and their teachers. There were also clear examples of intergenerational cooperation between older people and young students.

The visits provided a strong, practical endorsement of the theoretical and scientific issues discussed in the plenary sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the role of the elderly as vital contributors to the education of the young and of adults be affirmed and strengthened, at local, national and international levels.

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2. That international and bilateral cooperation to develop programmes that promote intergenerational education, with special reference to literacy and the needs of rural populations in developing countries, be undertaken as a matter of urgency by governments and nongovernmental organizations.

3. That Unesco , using existing international normative instruments , seeks to coordinate activities to promote intergenerational education by setting up a center for research , and the development of training programmes and suitable educational materials to enable old people to play their part ; and that these materials reflect different learning styles , cultural differences and different forms of teaching.

4. That this Consultation appoints a small working party to liase with Unesco to draw up a short and long term action plan to encourage intergenerational and cross-cultural research and the establishment of practical , innovative , community based projects which utilize the knowledge and skills of old people; and that one function of the working party should be to identify and gather resources for cooperation in projects that facilitate intergenerational education.

5. That the International Association of Universities of the Third Age be expanded and strengthened, especially, with reference to developing countries.

6. That Unesco be requested to carry out an international study on universities for the aged in the 1980's.

7. That a further expert consultation be convened by Unesco in two years to review progress and recommend further action.

CLOSING SESSION
ADOPTION OF THE REPORT
WUHAN DECLARATION

The Expert Consultation on the Utilization of the Experence and Competence of the Elderly in the Education of Youth and Adults Meeting at Wuhan, in the People's Republic of China on 21-25th November, 1989, declares that old people are an important and necessary resource in the education of youth and adults. By ensuring that the elderly have access to education, society will enhance their role and effectiveness in intergenerational education, thereby, strenthening the family.

The Consultation believes that social development, culture and literacy will benefit from an acknowledgement and commitment by governments and nongovernmental organizations that community life will be enriched by the integration of old people who are the repositories of knowledge, skills, experience, and wisdom.

At a time of dislocation of the family, the education of the elderly and their involvement in intergenerational cooperation is vital and should

be considered as a promity. The strengthening of the role of the family in the total education process will be of long-term value to society as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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